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ANNAPOLIS

considered as a suitable situation for a great Naval Depot, and Arsenal of Marine Stores.

By the Corporation of Annapolis,

January 8, 1848.

Mr. Hughes from the committee appointed to prepare arguments in support of their memorial to the legislature of the State of Maryland, relative to a Naval Depot, delivered the following

REPORT:

As we have presumed to request the attention of various authorities, to the claims of Annapolis for consideration, as a suitable site for a great Naval Depot and Depot of Marine Stores, it is but just that we should assign the grounds upon which our persuasions are founded.

Disclaiming any design to prejudice fair and essential inquiry, which the Government have wisely instituted on the subject, we rather deem it a duty to afford such local information to the Board of Commissioners as may be useful in forming a conclusion so important to the general interests of the country—and certainly it is proper that the community who may be in possession of the greatest advantages for such an object, should be awake to their pretensions.

The Navy of the United States requires no greater incentives to interest the feelings of the country than those they have themselves created. Every thing that regards the navy, commands the attention of the whole community. The youngest of us can remember its commencement—its masculine strides to its present distinguished position in the estimation of the world is but the surety of its future destiny; its destiny as strongly marked and confidently expected as any circumstance within the scope of rational calculation. It is since the termination of the late war with Britain that ships of the line have been added to our navy; three of them now challenge the world for maritime perfection upon the ocean, and in less than three years four others will be added, and as many more will replenish the ways from which the latter will be launched. Our country is rich in facilities for building, but it is yet deficient in the conveniences for expeditiously fitting, repairing and supplying vessels of this class. Establishments for this purpose are indispensable. The general government some time since directed three naval officers of the first character for talents and experience to examine and report the most eligible situation for this object; they unanimously agreed in recommending that the waters of the Chesapeake should at some point or other be the place of a Naval Depot and rendezvous, but as to the particular spot they found so many eligible situations, that each member of the board recommended a different one, as possessing in their separate opinions the highest inducements for selection. From this diversity of opinion the Executive concluded the propriety of more mature investigation, and a new board consisting of three officers of the Engineer Corps and two Naval Officers are now engaged in the survey. The same commissioners have been likewise required to suggest the most effectual means of defending the Chesapeake bay from the intrusion of an enemy. It need not be intimated how deeply interested every inhabitant of its shores must feel in the judicious application of the nation's energies to such great objects.

These two objects although happily connected in the general view, are nevertheless essentially distinct in themselves; a Naval Depot cannot be expected in itself to form a material item in the means of defending the Chesapeake Bay—yet it is indispensable that the bay should be defended independent of the protection that a Naval Arsenal will require. It is confidently presumed, that no American would consent to have the Chesapeake occupied by an enemy, in case of another war,

as it was during the last war, if it could be possible to avoid it. Common sense dictates that whatever be the ultimate means determined upon for defending the Chesapeake, they should be placed as near to its entrance as possible. But leaving this question where it is properly deposited, let us proceed to inquire what are the probable grounds upon which a selection for the situation of the Naval Depot will be predicted, and how far the several places thought of for that purpose appear to possess the requisites?

It is presumed that a situation for a great Depot of marine stores will not be selected with so much regard to its immediate contiguity to the ocean as to its ultimate security, inasmuch as it is not so much designed for a resort for vessels prepared for action, as for those that are disabled, where they may securely & expeditiously refit. Hence an outer harbour, for vessels prepared for sea, distinct from the place of depot itself, is always contemplated. Norfolk never enters into the estimate of suitable situations without regarding Hampton Roads as its outer harbour. If this place can be rendered safe from the intrusions of an enemy, as has been proposed, it will then become as safe a resort for vessels from other parts of the bay as for those from Norfolk. The same may be said of the mouth of York River with additional force; Commodore Rodgers pronounces the latter place to be the only natural key to the Chesapeake bay; hence if an enemy cannot be excluded by positions nearer the mouth of the bay, this place will probably become in any case the site of some protecting batteries, that will preserve it as a harbour for us, and exclude an enemy its advantages. The Chesapeake bay off Annapolis, constituting Annapolis Roads, are better moorings for men of war than the Downs afford to the British fleet; and every harbour of the bay below, that is secure from an enemy, is by nature an outer harbour to the place. But we are bound in a case like the present where all is yet to be tested by experiment, to suppose that the defences proposed for the mouth of the Chesapeake, though it may answer to exclude small depredatory expeditions, may possibly fail to prevent a desperate effort of a formidable force, prompted by a most important object. The fertile shores of the Chesapeake, the open bosom of the very centre of our country to which its waters flow—the Capital of the nation—the city of Baltimore, and the stores of maritime means which you propose to concentrate in your Depot, all united, will never fail to offer the most powerful motives to the enterprise of a daring enemy. We know the intrepidity of those against whom in naval concerns we naturally turn our eyes with suspicion. Let us estimate the importance, the decision indeed, which the possession or destruction of these maritime means would give to conflicting fleets—a squadron defeated could soon be repaired at a suitable Arsenal—but destroy your arsenal, & your squadron will soon be useless; calculate how much an enemy would attempt in order to destroy our maritime means in its nest, and we need no other admonition to security. Ships prepared for action, or forces properly operative, may wait an enemy in an outer harbour, or seek him on the open ocean, but the magazine should certainly be placed as remote from danger as it can be, to answer its proper purposes. Presuming then that the artificial defences which may be contemplated for the waters of the Chesapeake will not be deemed of themselves sufficient protection for such an establishment from such strong motives of attack, every other means of security within our reach should be placed between the Depot and the enemy; a situation as remote from sudden assault as is admissible with convenience to the sea—difficult of attack and easily defensible, having powerful numerical forces at hand that can be called at a moment to its protection. Next to a sufficient depth of water, and security from assault of an enemy, convenience to necessary supplies of timber and naval stores, health of situation, security from dangerous ice, and from any thing that could materially interrupt the constant progress of

work upon vessels building or requiring repairs—these are objects of primary consequence in the calculation, nor is the vicinity of a large city and populous neighbourhood, whence may commodiously be drawn supplies of labour, of stores, and of provisions, to be considered of secondary importance. Believing these to be the only primary (and perhaps these are all indispensable) properties to a suitable site for a Naval Depot, it remains that we examine the pretensions of Annapolis to those prerequisites, in comparison with other places.

Annapolis unites more striking peculiarities in its situation perhaps, than can be discovered in any other harbour upon the Chesapeake bay. It is the highest port that continues at all seasons of the year open to navigation, and therefore it becomes the natural seaport of Baltimore for several months of every year. It is the nearest port to the seat of the General Government, of which it has as emphatically been called the natural seaport also; the harbour is convenient to the bay, being immediately within the mouth of the river, spacious, beautiful, entirely secure from every wind, and free from currents or floating ice—the water within the bar is from 30 to 40 and even in some places 50 feet deep, and that within an inconsiderable distance of the shore; the anchorage unexceptionable; several deep and convenient creeks make from the Severn, affording admirable sites for docks, &c.—hulls on every beach for wharfing with, and within innumerable springs of fine water* in every direction, as well as a never failing stream which can be easily conducted to navigable water for supplies to shipping—blessed with salubrity and health† that has become proverbial, and which has preserved its population from even the report of having those awful infections which have repeatedly visited every neighbouring town within the last 25 years—possessing besides many other convenient resources of timber, which both the shores of the bay afford in such abundance, one of the finest forests of pine, suitable for masts and spars within 12 miles of the spot upon the head of Severn, and equally as fine a forest of Oaks suitable for ship building; within the same distance upon West River. If the Chesapeake be open to our vessels, its ample supplies will never fail; if it be closed those resources added to what may be derived from many other places in the vicinity, and from the valleys of the neighbouring Patuxent, will be fully adequate to every such peculiar necessity. The inexhaustible stores of lumber, timber, and hemp from Pennsylvania and the state of New York, by the Susquehanna River, are convenient enough to reach the harbour in their rafts and arks, and will meet an important market at such a Depot; the projected Canal between the Chesapeake and Delaware will open the resources of the

latter if necessary;† tar and pitch can be drawn from its usual sources in its usual channel if we preserve the navigation of the Chesapeake—if that fails, the navigation of James River will afford it a passage which will leave but an inconsiderable transportation by land, whilst the ample resources of other kinds—of labour, of provisions, of stock, of the various abstract supplies for which it is always necessary to resort to commercial cities, may be amply supplied by the immediate vicinity of Baltimore. To those prerequisites may be added as a consequence, if this place should be selected, being as near as it could be to the source of the General Authorities who immediately preside over such establishments, it will be more directly under the eye of government, & its many & important interests will necessarily become blended & connected more or less with the seat of government, when intercourse with that place will become so convenient and constant.

But with a steady eye to the ultimate safety of a Depot from the attempts of an enemy, we are still aware that its eligibility for defence, in the present situation of our country, is superior to every other consideration. For this object it is scarcely possible that any other place upon the Chesapeake unites so many advantages.

From attack by water, the bar at the mouth of the river, forms one very important barrier in itself; for though it is presumed for argument that this difficulty has been removed sufficiently for our purposes of ingress and egress (because what can be accomplished with so much certainty and with a sum so diminutive compared to the object in view may be reasonably considered as accomplished,) yet the convenience with which a channel so narrow and defined may be interrupted to prevent enemy's ships from passing, is manifest, and presents at once an obstacle absolutely insurmountable to the most formidable of the enemy's forces. The mouth of the river is formed by Greenberry's Point on the north, and Horn Point on the south side of Severn, which are distant only one measured mile from each other; the bar making from Greenberry's Point and stretching to the southward, entirely crosses the mouth of Severn and obliges vessels of ordinary burthen even, to run first, fore quarter on, then after passing at broad side, to expose a close after quarter at least for one mile to a fair range from a commanding battery that was thrown up on a very advantageous position on Horn Point during the revolution, and which is susceptible of being made a very formidable post. After passing this battery, & while still exposed to its quarter fire, an invading vessel is obliged by a bar running off from Horn Point into the Severn, and completely interlocking the bar from Greenberry's, to stand directly bow on to Fort Madison for at least one mile, and until within 30 yards of its guns, exposed at the same time to the quarter fire from Horn Point, to the cross fire from Fort Severn, and to such other works as it may be proper to have upon Beauman's Heights, which was likewise occupied during the revolution, and which commands the entire harbour; to such a situation as this, it is incredible that an enemy would ever expose themselves because retreat from it would be impracticable, without the wind changing from the direction which would bring them in. The natural conveniences therefore which are presented for defending Annapolis harbour from attack by water, can scarcely be surpassed by any position, and having considerable public property and works materially forwarded, the defence on this side may be considered as already nearly accomplished to our hands.

On the land side, Annapolis is scarcely less advantageously situated for defence. A navigable creek makes from the harbour on each side of the town, and after describing nearly a circle of about one mile in diameter, on which the city stands, approach to within a few hundred yards of each other, where they may with very little labour be connected by a canal that would insulate the place and render it impregnable. The face of the country presents beyond this, on the side of South River, defiles that no enemy would venture to pass if defended at all, and towards the interior an open champaign country, which would expose the rear of an enemy to any forces moved upon them from the interior.

To those very superior natural advantages for defence, Annapolis possesses incidental advantages in a more eminent degree than any other place upon the Chesapeake. The fruitful experience of the last twenty-five years has convinced all military men that whatever advantages there may be in positions, numerical force is still one of the safest and best resorts in any case of defence. Wherever the Depot may be placed, a considerable number of men must always be estimated for its protection, and the probability of its being attacked will always depend more or less upon the enemy's calculation of comparative force.

It does not comport with the spirit of our political institutions, nor the genius of our people, to maintain large regular garrisons, especially in time of peace; nor can we by any expedient rely upon any considerable number of recruits being raised in a moment. We can hardly expect our future wars to advance slowly upon us by regular approaches for seven years, as the last one did, and we know that to seize us on the naval means of her rivals, even in anticipation of a declaration of war, is the repeated policy of at least one maritime power—such was the course in the seizure of the Spanish ships by England in 1798; and the first intimation of danger to the Danish fleet at Copenhagen, was Nelson's squadron within gunshot, demanding its surrender for safe keeping. Place the great Depot of your naval means near the enemy's grasp—so near that one favourable night might bring them from beyond the Capes within bomb shot of your stores, and where no considerable population is immediately at hand to aid, and what regular forces will you demand for its defence? Would the whole military establishment we maintain* answer this single object? To select then a place having the double advantage of being more difficult of access to an enemy, and being within the compass of the united numerical forces of several principal cities and their thickly populated neighbourhoods, that may always be relied upon to move in time to its defence, is consistent with the plainest dictates of common sense and reason. By a few telegraphic posts on suitable points, information of the appearance of a hostile fleet could be communicated in half an hour from the capes to Annapolis, Washington, George-Town, Alexandria and Baltimore; the forces from any or all of these places could reach a central position, or march to the relief of the place threatened, and be prepared for the enemy before he could in the common course of events reach its vicinity, and yet not be obliged to leave their own homes so far as to endanger their safety.

These advantages have been urged as applicable to St. Mary's, but with what propriety may be very questionable. St. Mary's is situated 90 miles from Baltimore, the whole of which must be marched by land in such a case with all the accompanying munitions. Whether they could be summoned from such a distance and marched to the scene of action in time, may be fairly doubted; and it is equally questionable whether it would be judicious or safe to draw them such a distance from a home that may be menaced by the same enemy the first fair wind after such troops may have reached this distance from it. A hostile fleet might reach the Patapsco in one day from St. Mary's—it would probably take these troops a week to retrace their steps.

*About 8000 men.
(To be continued.)

†The distance from Susquehanna to the head of the bay to Annapolis is the same as to Baltimore, with this advantage, though, that the direction is the same the whole distance, a wind that is favourable to come down the bay will be favourable to Annapolis, and may not be so to go up the Patapsco.

*On Col. Duvall's place alone, within the limits of the city, there are not less than 100 springs of water.

†A more striking test of the health of any place can hardly be produced than that raw militia drawn from their homes and garrisoned in it, continue to enjoy good health; and it is a singular fact, that of all the troops ordered into Annapolis by Gov. Winder during the war (& it was seldom without some, and frequently several battalions at a time,) but one death occurred amongst them, and that one casualty. Fort Madison, however, on the opposite side of Severn, is not considered so healthy, owing to the immediate vicinity of two large ponds, which might be easily drained. Captain Reed, commander at this post, (one of the most excellent and scientific officers in the service, who has already effected with no other assistance than the voluntary labour of the detachment he commands, such an alteration in the United States property and garrison at Fort Severn, as excites the admiration and confidence of every one who has had an opportunity of seeing the change,) expresses his decided impression that by draining those ponds the place will be as healthy as any situation.

By His Excellency Charles Ridgely of Hampton, Esquire Governor of Maryland.

A PROCLAMATION

The innumerable mercies which it hath pleased Almighty God to bestow upon our beloved Country, during the year, cannot fail to excite and kindle emotions of thankfulness in every heart. At no period have the blessings of Divine Providence been so signally displayed. Peace, and in its attendant train, all human advantages, prosperity of our Country, strength and inviolability maintain our institutions, & elevate to the loftiest height the glory of our National Character. Plenty, liberally rewarding the labors of Industry, from the harvest of her bounties; Science and the Arts flourish; genius, to whatever can improve and ameliorate the condition of mankind, is ligion extending her mild and powerful sway throughout the borders of the land, and shedding her benignant influence upon the public moral & manners; these are chief among the blessings which demand a People's gratitude to the Divine and munificent Author of them.

In these mercies the good People of the State of Maryland have abundantly participated; the wounds inflicted by war, are already healed; the happy returns with rich abundance to the industry of her sons; her Commerce whitens every sea, and renders her a most enviable quarter of the globe, to her wealth & power; while her manufactures carry her forward in the proudest anticipation of real independence. In the full and unimpeded enjoyment of these, and other blessings, it is meet that we should unite in thanksgiving to the Divine source whence they all proceed, that we may unite in the Lord, thanksgiving and praise for all his mercies towards us, and acknowledge our dependence on his bounty, and implore pardon for our transgressions, and pay our vows of renewed obedience.

Actuated by these sentiments, and constantly relying on the general concurrence of the good People of the State of Maryland, I, the Governor, do issue this Proclamation, recommending Thursday the 18th day of January, to be observed and kept as a day of Public Thanksgiving and Praise to the Merciful and Gracious Father of the Universe.

Given under my hand, and the Seal of the State of Maryland, this 10th day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight.

C. RIDGELY, Governor.

By His Excellency's command, JOHN A. PHILLIPS, Secretary.

Ordered, That the following be published in the State Gazette, and in the newspapers in this State, to wit:—

Frederick-town, Louisa, &c. School

These two objects although happily connected in the general view, are nevertheless essentially distinct in themselves; a Naval Depot cannot be expected in itself to form a material item in the means of defending the Chesapeake Bay—yet it is indispensable that the bay should be defended independent of the protection that a Naval Arsenal will require. It is confidently presumed, that no American would consent to have the Chesapeake occupied by an enemy, in case of another war,